

WASHINGTON, D.C. - After ignoring warnings from lawmakers dating back to last summer, the Department of Homeland Security today capitulated and offered new passport requirements for travel in the Western Hemisphere.

Rep. Sam Farr (CA-17), co-chairman of the Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus, warned last year that the new requirements could overwhelm the State Department's passport application system. His cautions were not heeded, and delays to receive passports now stretch to three months.

"Keeping our skies safe is important, but our rules must also be practical," said Rep. Farr. "Passing new rules without considering the real-life ramifications is irresponsible, interrupting family travel and disrupting our travel industry."

The new ruling delays until September 30 the requirement for a passport to fly between the United States and Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda. However, travelers must provide official proof of application for a passport as well as government-issued photo identification. The ruling does not affect entry requirements to other countries.

Rep. Farr pressed the issue last year as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, requesting that the Department of Homeland Security delay the rule to allow for "rational implementation." Rep. Farr was concerned that the new regulations would limit Americans' travel and hurt America's travel and tourism industry, which brings \$2 billion to the Central Coast.

For Central Coast residents who run into problems when applying for a passport, Rep. Farr's district office can offer assistance negotiating through the red tape and provide advice for expediting the process. To contact Rep. Farr's local office, call (831) 424-2229.

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